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COMMITTEE FOR PROGRAMME AND
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Agenda item 3

DRAFT REPORT

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Addendum

PROGRAMME QUESTIONS:

UNITED NATIONS REFORM: MEASURES AND PROPOSALS (item 2 (b))

PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1998-1999 (item 2 (a))

Section 2B. Disarmament

1. At its 33rd meeting, on 15 October 1997, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered section 2B, Disarmament, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 contained in document A/52/303.

Discussion

2. Several delegations indicated that the narrative part of the section on disarmament and arms regulation, which contained references to "spread of nuclear weapons technology and material" and "weapons development", went beyond the objectives of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001[1] and other existing mandates of the General Assembly. Those references contradicted the consensus document approved by the General Assembly at its first special session devoted to disarmament which reaffirmed that the United Nations had the foremost responsibility to promote nuclear disarmament. Other delegations pointed out that the Assembly had recognized that the threat to international peace and security came from existing massive nuclear arsenals, and that there were multilaterally negotiated regimes that dealt with the "spread" of weapons,

particularly weapons of mass destruction. The secretariat could not assume, therefore, any role that went beyond those treaties since existing international legal instruments, including relevant disarmament conventions and treaties, provided the most appropriate forums to deal with those issues. Some delegations also objected to the use of the term "arms regulation" as it might affect the work programme of the Department. Those delegations pointed out that the term "arms regulation" was not mentioned in Article 26 of the Charter of the United Nations and had never been put into effect and should thus only be used in that context. They observed that they could consider the establishment of the new Department with the sole title of "Disarmament", which would be consistent with the title of programme 26 of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001. Some delegations pointed to the emphasis on non-proliferation, namely, a future preventive role, and to the absence of references to reducing existing stockpiles. The view was expressed that the programme of work on disarmament as contained in the medium-term plan should have been adequately emphasized, particularly since it was one of the priority issues and the principal policy directive of the Organization.

3. A number of delegations felt that detailed activities to be carried out by the new Department should have been reflected in the Secretary-General's report and that details of the work programme of the new Department should have been more extensive. Some delegations pointed out that the narrative contained in paragraph 2B.3 indicated that the establishment of the new Department would entail the transfer from the Department of Political Affairs to the new Department of activities under programme 26, Disarmament, of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001, including the servicing of the Conference on Disarmament and backstopping to the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. On the basis of the assurances contained in paragraph 2B.3, those delegations indicated that a repetition of the activities already outlined in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 would not be required in the current report. Another delegation welcomed the efforts of the Secretariat not to reiterate those activities that were already included in the Secretary-General's proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 and made clear that while discussion in the Committee might seek to clarify aspects of the programme narrative through the medium of document A/52/303, that must not cut across work under way in the plenary meetings in respect of the Secretary-General's proposals on reform (A/51/950). The same delegation believed that it was not for the Committee, at that stage, to challenge specific aspects of the proposals. Other delegations reaffirmed the role of the Committee to review the programmatic aspects of the proposals and that that role did not change regardless of the deliberation in the plenary meetings.

4. Several delegations expressed concern that the creation of the proposed Department would result in a duplication of the activities of the Conference on Disarmament at Geneva and reaffirmed the position that the creation of the new Department should not result in a secondary role in connection with the activities at Geneva. Those delegations stressed the importance of the need to maintain a balance between the two entities, each working within the context of the mandates entrusted to them. Many delegations expressed the view that the proposal should be proportionate to the supporting role, which was at present being played satisfactorily by the United Nations Centre for Disarmament. One delegation stressed the importance of the balance of functions between the

Conference on Disarmament and the Department of Disarmament and Arms Regulation and expressed preference that the Department should be headed by an official at the Assistant Secretary-General level in order to avoid unnecessary competition between the Office at Geneva and the Department in New York.

5. One delegation stressed that appropriate resources should be given to the new Department. That delegation considered that the level of resources approved for disarmament activities within the Organization should be maintained.

6. Some delegations expressed the view that the United Nations mandate on disarmament was the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. It could only be revised by the fourth special session devoted to disarmament, whenever that took place. The essence lay in disarmament negotiations. That was how consensus was achieved on mandates. Therefore the centre of gravity should lie with the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission. The role of the Secretariat in disarmament was largely confined to servicing the negotiating bodies. This was being adequately done by the existing set-up.

7. Many delegations deeply regretted that the narrative of the section on disarmament had not been drafted in accordance with the approved medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 and strongly requested the Secretariat to revise the narrative. Accordingly, those delegations made the following proposal for inclusion in the "Conclusions and recommendations" part of the report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination:

> "The Committee for Programme and Coordination recommends to the General Assembly that the narrative part of the section on "Disarmament" should be revised in accordance with the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 and the final document of the first special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament."

8. Some delegations welcomed the Secretariat's assurance that the only changes being proposed were organizational ones.

9. One delegation expressed the view that the proposal of the Secretary-General merely reflected a redistribution of responsibility for programmes and subprogrammes that the Committee had reviewed earlier in the summer. One delegation also urged the Secretary-General to seek a capable person for the position of Under-Secretary-General, which would thereby relieve the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva of his additional responsibility as Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament as soon as was feasible. The same delegation emphasized that the disarmament position required full-time attention.

Conclusions and recommendations

10. The Committee was unable to reach agreement on the conclusions and recommendations to be made to the General Assembly.

Notes

[1] Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Supplement No. 6 and corrigendum (A/51/6/Rev.1 and Rev.1/Corr.1).